

SUSTAINABLE SUSSEX



ENVIRONMENTAL CHAMPIONS

US

UNIVERSITY
OF SUSSEX

WE WILL PROMOTE BIODIVERSITY AND SUSTAINABLE FOOD, WASTE AND WATER CONSUMPTION AND RECYCLING

We will achieve this objective through four key areas of activity. Firstly, introducing new recycling and waste-reduction targets. Secondly by introducing policies to make our food and water consumption more sustainable. Thirdly, by increasing the biodiversity of our campus. And fourthly, by engaging staff and students as change agents in greening our campus. Our key commitments in this area are summarised below and explained in more detail in the remainder of this section.

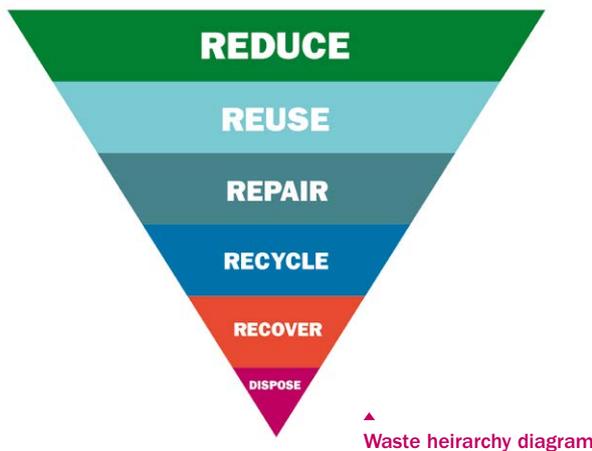
KEY COMMITMENTS: ENVIRONMENTAL CHAMPIONS

- Recycle 50% of our waste by 2025 (subject to further compositional analysis) and reduce the tonnage of waste produced per student by 10% by 2025
- Set annual recycling targets for all of our waste streams by August 2022
- Tender our waste contracts, ensuring appropriate recycling targets and innovation are included within them by December 2022
- Review of our current bin numbers, locations and signage by December 2021
- Launch a waste and recycling communications and engagement plan by August 2022 that will enable us to recruit a network of waste champions to help support and promote recycling and create behaviour change.
- Produce policies on plastic and project waste reduction by December 2022
- Introduce new sustainable food priorities to encourage:
 - sourcing produce from local suppliers
 - better consumer information
 - an increase in net zero cafés
 - a reduction in meat consumption by August 2023
- Support continued sustainable food production and distribution on campus including the continued redistribution of surplus food
- Conduct a strategic review of options to improve water sustainability and set water consumption targets by August 2024
- Publish our draft biodiversity policy by August 2021 and hold a *Big Biodiversity Conversation* from January 2022 to agree our target for setting aside either 30%, 40% or 50% of the land on campus for nature
- Engage every member of staff, students – and, where appropriate, community members – in bringing our sustainability vision and strategy to life

50% OF WASTE RECYCLED BY 2025



We have all been moved by the images of plastic in the ocean and appalled by the volume of unwanted food waste as children go hungry. Waste is an emotive issue. If we want to be truly ethical and sustainable consumers we need to **do more to reduce, reuse and recycle the waste that we produce** from our daily lives.



Waste hierarchy diagram

That is why we are introducing two ambitious waste reduction, reuse and recycling targets. The first is to reduce the total volume of waste produced. We will do this by setting a target of **reducing the volume of weight produced per student by 10% by 2025**.

The second is to **recycle 50% of our waste by 2025**.² This includes separate sub-targets of recycling 55% of residential waste and 70% of non-residential waste over the same time period. By setting these stretching and challenging targets for ourselves as an institution, we aim to be at the forefront of tackling the waste problem and promoting a more circular economy.

To achieve these targets, we will improve the quality of our waste data by amending our contract with Sussex Estates and Facilities (SEF) to require more detailed waste reporting and to enable us to **set annual targets on all of our waste streams from August 2022** based on regular waste audits and compositional analysis.

We will then look to **tender our waste contracts by December 2022** and ensure that all of these targets are passed down the supply chain to our subcontractors as key performance indicators with appropriate reporting requirements. We will also use these procurements to **ask for new innovation in our recycling approaches**.

Yet, how much waste we can reduce and recycle will largely come down to the quality of the facilities that we provide, our communication and engagement activity and our subsequent ability to drive positive behaviour change.

That is why we will ask SEF to undertake a **review of our current bin numbers, locations and signage by December 2021** so that we can make the necessary business case for any improvements in signage, facilities or replacement, such as additional aerobic digestors for student food waste.

We will also develop a waste and recycling strategic **communications and engagement** plan that will enable us to:

- Recruit a network of **waste champions** to help support and promote recycling
- Engage students in competitions to design **better recycling information**
- Include recycling information in staff and student inductions
- Highlight and support pre-existing **reuse activities**, such as donations to local charities and clothes swaps on campus.

All of this communication and engagement work will be underpinned by the production of a **policy on plastic and waste reduction and reuse**, and a **project-waste recycling policy** for the University and our contractors by December 2022.

¹ This target is provisional, subject to a full compositional waste analysis to understand current recycling practices that has not been possible during the production of this strategy due to Covid-19.

RESPONSIBLE FOOD AND WATER PRODUCTION AND CONSUMPTION



The United Nations estimate that farming and food production cause around a third of global greenhouse gas emissions. This is a massive environmental impact and we will not take it lightly. We are passionate about providing sustainable food choices on campus, with Sussex Food (the University's catering provider) being awarded the highest-possible rating by the Sustainable Restaurant Association in 2019.

However, we want to go even further. That is why we have created **four new sustainable food priorities** that we want to see on our campus. Firstly, we will ensure that at least 80% of our fresh produce, excluding dairy, comes from **local producers** with a focus on seasonally appropriate foods where possible.

Secondly, we will **improve the quality of consumer information** in relation to food sustainability. We will do this by **piloting the introduction of a food sustainability traffic light system**. This will rank different menu choices as red, amber or green according to their sustainability in the same way that salt, fat and sugar content is colour coded on supermarket food from September 2021.

Thirdly, we will **review all catering outlets to identify their suitability for becoming net zero cafés** by December 2022, and use the findings to select a number of locations to offer net zero catering.

Fourthly and finally, we will respond to the recent Students' Union referendum result on banning the sale of beef and lamb on campus by **establishing a citizen-style assembly of students and staff**. This will identify recommendations on what would need to be done to change consumer demand to support the campus consuming less meat and/or becoming **beef and lamb free** by 2023, and **if there is a place for sustainably sourced meat on our menus**.

Outside of these principles we will continue to **actively support the production and distribution of sustainable food** on campus via our Forest Food Garden project, and student run Roots allotments and Food Waste Café. In particular, our Sustainability Committee is supportive of the Students' Union investigating the feasibility of establishing a community kitchen on campus. We will also **continue to support the redistribution of surplus food** to food banks and other community destinations.

We will also support the **sustainable production and consumption of water on campus**. We will do this by building water-efficiency products and standards into all of **our work around energy-efficient buildings and achieving net zero**. However, we want to go even further than this and treat clean water and sanitation, water conservation and the protection of aquatic ecosystems as key priorities in their own right.

This has not historically been an area of comparative strength for the University, so we will create a task force to conduct a **strategic review of options** to increase sustainable water consumption and production on campus from January 2024 that will result in the **setting of water consumption targets from August 2024 onwards**.

BIODIVERSE CAMPUS



Blessed with an abundance of green space (including some that falls within national park boundaries) and an impressive list of global biodiversity experts; Sussex is ideally placed to become the most biodiverse campus in the UK.

We will publish a draft **biodiversity policy by August 2021**, ahead of consulting on our future goals in a **Big Biodiversity Conversation**.

The draft policy contains **nine key biodiversity principles** that we will apply to our campus. Shaped in consultation with renowned biodiversity academics, these include: planting native species of plants, creating water habitats and avoiding the use of pesticides and synthetic fertilisers where possible.

By incorporating these nine biodiversity principles into our annual grounds management plan we can strive to produce an **annual net gain in biodiversity each year**.

We will achieve these net gains by setting an ambitious target of **setting aside a certain percentage of the land on campus to nature**. We will use the *big biodiversity conversation* to engage staff and students on how much land we want to set aside for nature from a range of options: **a) 30%, b) 40% and c) 50% or more**.

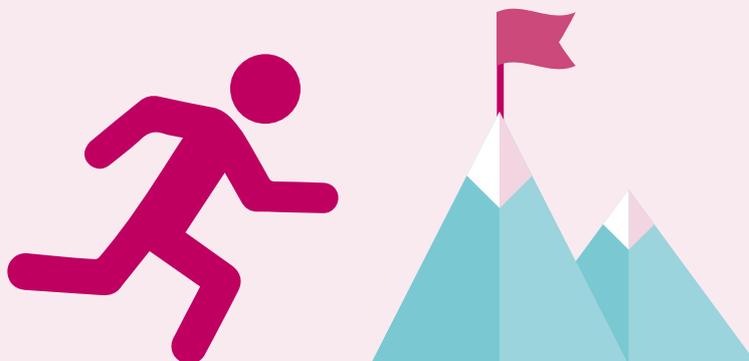
We will do this through the use of maps and visual aids that show how the campus can look under these different scenarios. We will also **ask staff and students to pick their preferred biodiversity projects** for us to take forward on campus. This will include everything from the creation of bee hotels, butterfly banks, orchards and therapeutic gardens to the use of passive rewilding in certain signed areas in compliance with health and safety regulations.

We will **begin the big biodiversity conversation in January 2022**, with the aim of having **agreed our preferred targets and an action plan of biodiversity projects by January 2023**, in time for agreement of the Sussex Estates and Facilities Ground Management Plan for the next academic year.

Once we have completed the *big biodiversity conversation*, we will engage staff, students – and where appropriate community members – in bringing the vision established by the *conversation to life* through practical permaculture and conservation projects and fundraising activities.

We will also **use our knowledge and expertise to help protect and restore local, national and global ecosystems** and help try to reverse the current mass extinction and loss of habitat trajectory that we are on. As part of this work, we will seek to form stronger links with the South Downs National Park, The Living Coast Biosphere, the Permaculture Trust and other key public, private, voluntary and community bodies.

BEHAVIOUR CHANGERS



Every strategy is only as good as the people who decide to implement it. If we want to achieve the goals set out in this strategy every member of staff and students at our University will need to pull together and do things differently.

By collectively showing a **commitment to positive behaviour change and an increase in volunteering activity, together** we can reach the tipping point – not the tipping point of climate disaster, but the tipping point of reaching net zero, of preventing mass extinction, and of increased equality, diversity, inclusion and social justice.

There is only one goal in this section of the strategy. That is to **engage every member of staff, students – and, where appropriate, community members – in bringing our sustainability vision and strategy to life.** We will do a number of things to support this goal.

Our dedicated sustainability communication and engagement officer will support our staff and students to consciously make more sustainable choices on campus through **new web pages and a programme of communications activities, including a stall at our Freshers Fairs.**

We will also **create a network of sustainability champions** in every academic school and professional service area. These champions will help to implement the strategy and **drive behaviour change from the bottom up** in the areas where they work and study.

Our sustainability champions will not be passive onlookers, they will be partners who get their hands dirty **supporting us in practical audits of our waste.** They will help to **clean up our beaches.** They will **redistribute food** and they will develop sustainability improvement plans in their Schools, offices and accommodation blocks.

We have previously used an external programme called Green Impact, to set environmental challenges for our staff. However, we suspended our Green Impact subscription during the pandemic because of the lack of staff on campus. We want to establish whether Green Impact continues to be the optimum tool for engaging our staff in implementing the vision within our strategy or if we should create our own environmental challenges for staff. So, we will have **focus groups in Summer 2021 with former Green Impact Teams to identify whether we continue with this service or create our own** from August 2021 onwards.

We will also extend our approach of integrating sustainability throughout the entire organisation into our operational processes and procedures.

Ultimately, this strategy needs to be a living, breathing vision powered by our staff and students. Our success will rest on our ability to galvanise everyone on campus and beyond to pull together to use our unique talents and realise our vision of being one the most sustainable universities in the world.